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SITUATION REPORT

POLAND

Problems encountered yesterday in starting talks between the government and strikers in Gdansk indicate the negotiations will be protracted and difficult.

The regime tried to gain the initiative by announcing that Premier Pinkowski would lead its negotiating team. The government initially refused to meet the precondition set by strikers that telephone communications be restored to Gdansk, backing down only after the strikers refused to begin talks--thus eroding some worker good will toward the new government leadership. Negotiations, however, will probably begin today at the Lenin Shipyards.

Skepticism about the significance of Sunday's massive personnel changes is not confined to strikers. many Poles feel party leader Gierk was only trying to protect his own position and others assert that the changes were too little and too late.

In addition to preparing for direct negotiations with the joint strike committee, the regime is moving quickly to give the impression that it intends to revamp the trade union movement. The trade union council will hold a plenary session today where a new union leader may be elected.

party oversight of union activities has fallen to the conservatively oriented Stanislaw Kania, who is also party secretary for military and security affairs. This does not bode well for any efforts to reform the trade unions.

Cardinal Wyszynski will speak today to pilgrims at Poland's most holy shrine in Czestochova. He will undoubtedly stress the need for peace and calm, as he did last Sunday; the strength and directness of his remarks may provide clues on how willing he is to involve the Church in settling the 12-day-old strike.

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East Germany

The strikes in Poland have spawned work stoppages by Polish guest workers in East Germany. Polish workers in the port of Rostock reportedly staged a strike for unidentified demands on 20 August; the outcome is not known.

another such strike recently at a factory in Cottbus near the Polish border, and party officials are closely monitoring Polish workers there. These strikes, similar to those that occurred in 1976 in response to riots in Poland over proposed price increases, apparently have not had any impact on East German workers.

Soviet Coverage

Moscow yesterday signaled support for Gierek's sweeping leadership changes and his proposals to resolve the impasse between the government and the strikers.

The English language service of TASS gisted Gierek's speech to the Central Committee plenum on Sunday, quoting his offer to meet the strikers "halfway" and to hold new trade union elections that are "fully democratic, secret," and open to candidates from the strike committees. Betraying Moscow's sensitivity over the possible impact of these concessions on its own population, the Soviet domestic radio report on the speech did not cover any of these points. Both reports, however, highlighted Gierek's warning that changes striking "at the foundations of the national and state existence" cannot be tolerated and that "only socialism" can safeguard Poland's national interests.

In the first Soviet commentary since the strikes began, TASS political observer Yuri Kornilov castigated Western media reporting on Poland as part of a "psychological war against the countries of socialism." He supported Gierek's policies by noting that the Polish leader's speech laid out "a strategic course" that could rectify the situation.

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Kornilov did not directly mention the Western radio-broadcasts to the Soviet Union that Moscow resumed jamming last week but clearly was seeking to justify that action. He labeled Western reporting on the events in Poland as "interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign socialist state," perhaps laying the groundwork for a Soviet defense of the jamming at the November meeting in Madrid to review implementation of the Helsinki Final Act. [REDACTED]

East Europe Reports

All of the East European countries reported the massive shakeup of the Polish leadership, but apparently only the Hungarians, who pride themselves on having responsive trade unions, were bold enough to play up Gierek's promise of free union elections. The East Germans reportedly provided unusual live television coverage of Gierek's speech, but avoided mention of the trade union issue in their written media. Romanian radio waited 17 hours to report the Polish developments.
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